

BRIEFING PAPER

2008 Fire Season Contacts, Information, and Issues Office of the Commissioner and Division of Forestry

April 28, 2008

[Alaska Statutes Section 41.15.010 - 41.15.240](#) mandates the Department of Natural Resources the responsibility to manage the wildland fire program for the State of Alaska.

Division of Forestry Fire and Aviation Program Goal: To provide safe, cost-effective, and efficient fire protection services and related fire and aviation management activities to protect natural resources and human life on State, private, and municipal lands, commensurate with the values at risk.

Contact Information

	<u>Work</u>
Chris Maisch, State Forester	451-2666
Dean Brown, Deputy State Forester	269-8476
Lynn Wilcock, Chief of Fire and Aviation	451-2675
Tom Kurth, Fire Operations Forester	356-5850
Rick DuPuis, AICC Coordinator	356-5645
State Logistics Center (SLC)	451-2680

Information Sources

- National Fire Information: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/sitreprt.pdf> Provides daily information on fire occurrence across the nation, including Alaska and indicates national priorities for all large wildland fire incidents.
- Alaska Interagency Coordination Center (AICC): <http://fire.ak.blm.gov/predsvcs/intel.php> Provides daily information on the Alaskan wildland fire situation including fire narratives, large fire maps, press releases, weather forecasts, and related items.
- Division of Forestry Homepage: <http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/forestry/fire/> Provides information on the Division of Forestry fire programs, including burn permits, hiring, Community Wildfire Protection Plans, the Aviation Program, and has links to the above websites.

2008 Issues

State Employee Recruitment and Retention- Each year the Division of Forestry is challenged with workforce losses due to retirement and competition. The Division of Forestry's inability to attract and retain qualified employees is due to a less competitive pay and benefits package than the Federal Government offers. The wildland fire program requires a highly-trained, experienced workforce. More time and money are spent each year on the hiring and training processes that could instead go towards the mission.

Increased Firefighting Costs- As all Alaskans are experiencing, general costs for firefighting have also been on the rise. Contracted resources, aviation resources, and energy costs are examples of areas that have experienced a drastic increase. The Division is working to be as cost efficient as possible amidst the fiscal challenges.

Public Involvement- Assisted by recent statute change, the Division of Forestry will revisit the process for involving the public in Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan- Fire Management Option changes. The home/ property owner's responsibility for applying FireWise principles will be incorporated into future Division of Forestry decisions, under the authority the statute provides for cabin protection.

Climate Change- An expanding body of evidence shows that global warming is impacting the boreal forest fire regime and other ecosystems in Alaska. Areas that have not historically had significant fire activity, such as the North Slope, are burning. Not only is Alaska experiencing more fires, they are also larger and longer lasting.